

Relief of Osteoarthritis Symptoms

Osteoarthritis is the most common disorder of the body's joints. It is characterized by the loss of cartilage, which is a slippery material that functions as a cushion for joints. In individuals affected by osteoarthritis, the loss of cartilage is measured by the decrease in the width of the joint space, which is the space between the ends of bones in a joint. An X-ray is used to view the decrease in joint space. Joints of the hands, hips, knees, feet, and spine all may be affected. Signs and symptoms of osteoarthritis typically begin as brief episodes of joint stiffness, and later develop into joint pain during motion. While running has not been found to increase the occurrence of this condition, contact sports are known to increase osteoarthritis incidence. Osteoarthritis of the knee also may be increased in persons with jobs that require frequent bending or carrying. For those who are overweight, weight loss may decrease symptoms of osteoarthritis of the knee. *Vitamin D* supplementation may be encouraged. Acetaminophen (*Tylenol*) is recommended initially for the treatment of mild symptoms. When acetaminophen does not completely alleviate pain associated with osteoarthritis, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen (*Motrin*) and diclofenac (*Voltaren*) are sometimes recommended.